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Will Teacher Militancy Make Evaluation of Teacher Performance Obsolete?

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Teacher militancy and evaluation are not necessarily incompatible. Job dissatisfaction, a potent cause of militancy, will not necessarily be removed by placing the emphasis upon higher salaries, better fringe benefits, a shorter work year, lighter teaching loads, and other extrinsic rewards for job performance. Rather, as other studies have suggested, militancy may be reduced if ways are found to enable teachers to feel a sense of intrinsic worth and job fulfillment in the performance of work. This would require a new approach to evaluation such as the following five-step approach for evaluator and evaluatee: (1) Agree upon specific relevant performance objectives, (2) plan a cooperative course of action to achieve the objectives, (3) establish ways to check periodically how well daily instructional procedures are achieving results, (4) make a joint assessment of results achieved, and (5) discuss the extent of achievement and decide the followup that is called for. A climate of acceptance between teacher and administrator is essential. It is concluded, after the examination of six relevant issues, that teacher militancy will not make teacher evaluation obsolete provided that evaluation is restructured. (HW)

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Will Teacher Militancy Make Evaluation of Teacher Performance Obsolete?

A short answer to this question might be "yes". However, in responding in this manner, there is a clear implication that the evaluation of teaching performance is a negotiable item and that militant teachers will force it to be abandoned.

A more thoughtful reply is to suggest that militancy and evaluation are not necessarily incompatible. Or putting it another way--the evaluation of teaching performance is not necessarily a cause of militancy. This response, however, makes two presumptions. First, that evaluation does not have to be and should not be synonymous with arbitrary rating. Secondly, the causes of teacher militancy result from many sources far more basic than the evaluation of teaching performance.

Etiology of Militancy

Militancy is a symptom of conditions that produce dissatisfaction. This may stem from conditions of work that produce feelings of frustration and discontent.

While the emphasis, in most instances, seems to be pressure for higher pay, more generous fringe benefits and better extrinsic

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conditions related to work, there is evidence that indicates the possibility that improvements in salaries and fringe benefits won't remove--or even reduce--militancy.

In other words, extrinsic gains may have little to do with job satisfaction and a sense of professional fulfillment.

Some causes of militancy. Teachers have become keenly aware of the linkage between one's education and his economic well being. They recognize that the economic health of our country is dependent upon the level and adequacy of education of its citizens. Teachers have a keener awareness of their own roles and importance in producing educated citizens. They perceive that their services are becoming more widely recognized as being indispensible to the attainment of quality education.

Teachers of today are being accorded a status which their counterparts in the 30's and 40's hardly dreamed possible. This produces a sense of power. Dissatisfactions and discontent can now be more boldly stated. The likelihood that protests will be heard and heeded is much greater.

James Cass and Max Birnbaum, last year in the Saturday Review pinpointed several of the problems which are alleged to be the causes of

militancy. Among those cited were these:

1. Dissatisfaction with extrinsic factors such as low salaries, inadequate supplemental benefits, and non-productive working conditions.
2. Job dissatisfaction.
3. Non-involvement in educational decision-making.
4. Rejection of conformity and subservience.
5. Bureaucratic and unresponsive administrative processes.
6. Loss of personal identity and a feeling of professional aloneness.
7. Difficulty in identifying with on-going organizational goals and objectives of the school system.
8. Impatience with irrelevancies in the educational process.
9. A more pragmatic, and less idealistic outlook.
10. Organizational ferment and rivalry in the teaching profession.

J. Warren Adair, writing last year in the American School Board Journal, also explored the causes of teacher militancy. He reported a teacher survey he had conducted in the spring of 1967 in six counties in upper New York State. Using the F.B. Herzberg theory of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in job performance, he asked each teacher to recall a time when he felt exceptionally

good or unusually bad about his work. The teacher was asked to say what he thought was the reason for his feelings.

Adair concluded that job dissatisfaction--a potent cause of militancy--won't necessarily be removed by putting the emphasis upon higher salaries, better fringe benefits, a shorter work year, lighter teaching loads, and other extrinsic rewards for job performance. These compensations have been called "hygiene factors" and do not necessarily motivate. Rather, they merely alleviate dissatisfaction.

Factors that really motivate are:

--A sense of achievement.

--Success in job performance.

--Seeing the results of work.

--Being appreciated.

--Having worth recognized.

--Better interpersonal relations with students.

Not only does Adair's study tend to confirm research done earlier by Herzberg and others, it offers some tangible evidence that militancy may be reduced--perhaps removed--if ways are opened up to enable teachers to feel a sense of

intrinsic worth and job fulfillment in the performance of work.

In short, militancy is a symptom. The important thing is to understand its etiology and seek ways to generate avenues through which teachers may achieve intrinsic rewards for work well done.

A Different View of Evaluation

You will recall that I made the presumption at the outset that if evaluation of teaching performance is based upon a different set of premises than those underlying arbitrary rating of performance, that evaluation need not automatically be considered a cause of militancy.

For many years, I have been advocating a process of evaluation that is different from that which is customarily followed.

The essense of this approach is to gear evaluation to pre-determined objectives or goals--to move away from inspectional observations--to avoid unilateral ratings. Instead of attempting to assess the quality of competence in terms of an indeterminate number of observations, a more promising approach is for the evaluator and evaluatee to:

1. Agree upon specific, relevant performance objectives.

2. Plan a cooperative course of action to achieve the objectives.

3. Establish ways and means to check periodically on the extent to which daily instructional procedures are achieving desired results.

4. Make a joint assessment of results achieved.

5. Hold a conference to discuss the extent of achievement and decide the follow-up that is called for.

The General Electric Company calls this approach to evaluation "work planning and review" - WPR. It makes more sense than unilateral evaluation wherein the evaluator attempts to assess performance in the typical framework of observations and ratings without reference to pre-determined goals or objectives.

An over-simplification of the two types of evaluation is to characterize the customary approach as that of "umpiring" while evaluation by objective means may be considered as "coaching". I'm prepared to argue that the difference between these two approaches is crucial to the issue we are considering today; namely, that militancy promises to make evaluation obsolete.

A surprising number of teachers want constructive advice and help. Someone has said:

"individuals welcome fair and unflattering comments if made in a total context of friendship and trust."

Conversely, a steady flow of praise may not bespeak real interest. There must be a climate of acceptance between the teacher and the administrator. Sincerity is more important than process.

Teachers may be problems to principals. The latter themselves can be problems for teachers. But these differences can be worked out provided there is a reasonable amount of good will and common effort between the two, more effective administrator-teacher relationships will stress the following objectives:

1. Goals and objectives, cooperatively established.
2. Good work, generously recognized.
3. Suggestions for improvement, mutually exchanged.
4. Priority work goals, jointly determined.
5. Responsibilities, definitely clarified.
6. Misinformation and misunderstanding, deliberately corrected.
7. Long-range goals, freely discussed.

This is an over-simplification of a concept of teacher evaluation that purports to promote a cooperative assessment of performance in reference to pre-determined work goals and objectives. I believe it is not only relevant, but also capable of being achieved. If this is true, then I would argue that

militancy will not necessarily make this kind of evaluation irrelevant because I believe teachers can see that it makes sense and alleviates many of the irritations that traditional rating programs produce.

Some Particular Issues

In the time that remains, let me react to some issues that my colleagues on the panel have been kind enough to raise in advance of our meeting today.

Issue #1 Do teachers fear evaluation because they suspect the real purpose of the process is to bring about merit pay?

Response This has been the traditional concern of teachers. The pressure to find a way to assess varying levels of successful teaching performance and to fix compensation accordingly has persisted over the years. In the 40's many schemes were used to institute merit pay. The stumbling block always was the inability to devise a satisfactory evaluation process that could be objectively and fairly applied. System after system tried merit pay and abandoned the attempt after creating more problems than were solved.

My own view is that--paradoxically--collective negotiation may turn out to be the very means to achieve merit pay. This is my

reasoning:

(a) Negotiation tends to elevate salary levels to a point where the public will be unwilling to support the cost of these increased outlays for teaching service unless boards of education and administrators show a willingness to evaluate teachers and work out differentiated pay plans.

(b) Boards of education and school administrators will be unable to avoid this responsibility.

(c) Teacher organizations are likely to continue to resist attempts to install merit pay plans.

(d) Eventually an evaluation process will be unilaterally developed and administered as a managerial prerogative. It will largely by rating. Principals will be required to make the evaluative assessments. Teachers will be obliged to accede in order to obtain escalations in pay achieved through successful collective bargaining. Differentiated pay scales tend to justify the public demand for compensation according to merit.

Issue #2 Will the business world with its system of personnel evaluation bring pressure on education to do a better job of evaluating teachers?

Response I would prefer to believe that school administrators may turn to business and industrial personnel management to borrow ideas and adopt evaluation procedures that can be used in education. Some business and industrial firms have done a great deal of action research in the area of performance evaluation. Many lessons they have learned about how to evaluate the services of managerial employees are relevant for educators. I would recommend that school administrators look into what personnel managers in business and industry have done and are doing.

This does not mean that their procedures are completely applicable without adaptation and modification. But we can learn a great deal from our managerial colleagues in the business world. We are foolish not to seize the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Thompson identified two additional questions. One had to do with the possibility of the business world forcing education to adopt better teacher evaluation. My answer is "very possibly". I think I've already reacted to that point. His other question had to do with public pressure to pay salaries in accordance with the quantity and quality of performance. Again, I think so and I've already speculated as to that possibility.

Mr. Tipler suggested that we consider some additional issues.

Issue #3 Will evaluation be a negotiable item?

Response I tend to feel that negotiation itself, i.e. the right to assess the quality of teaching performance is not a negotiable item. In other words, a school system should reserve the right to have an evaluation program.

When it comes to the manner by which the negotiation process shall be carried out, I believe the procedures should be developed by meeting and conferring together, that is to say, staff participation in the framework of a study committee with teacher, administrative, and supervisory personnel

discussing and hopefully concurring on the procedures of evaluation.

Issue #4 What is the future of the historic merit pay concept?

Response There is an ebb and flow to the interest in and demand for pay. Negotiation for higher salaries may very well increase the clamor for instituting merit pay. However, effective evaluation process remains the major stumbling block. I see no evidence that indicates that this roadblock is any closer to being removed than it has for the last 20 years. On the other hand, if adversary negotiation forces maximum salaries even higher, the public may demand that differentiated salary schedules be installed so that mediocre teaching service will not be compensated for at the same rate as that for superior performance. Public pressure may be sufficient to force arbitrary judgments regardless of the difficulties this type of assessment may cause. Teacher organizations will strongly resist merit pay plans. This will intensify tensions. Therefore, it is very difficult

to predict what may happen insofar as merit pay is concerned.

Issue #5 If teachers are evaluated, who may do the evaluation?

Response I would like to see an alternative to the evaluative judgment being made solely by the principal. I believe that there are other ways to make evaluative judgments. Time doesn't permit me to go into detail but in essence, I'd like to see some school system do some experimenting with other approaches, e.g.:

1. An evaluation team, in each school, might be formed to evaluate relevant data, collected by various methods, that would distinguish between excellent, average, and inferior performance.

2. This team might be composed of:
   (a) Principal
   (b) Central office instructional specialist
   (c) The teacher, and
   (d) The department head or other person having responsibility in the instructional area.

3. Evaluation should be related to pre-determined performance objectives. Performance data could be collected in a variety of ways.

4. The team members would analyze the data and make a cooperative judgment as to its significance.

5. The evaluation of unsatisfactory or very marginal teachers probably would have to be made by the principal and instructional specialist.

6. This explanation is too superficial, but the point I'm trying to make is to find a way to substitute a cooperative judgment for one that is unilateral and one that is made solely by the principal.

Issue #6 Will "student power" assure that there will be some type of effective teacher evaluation?

Response Yes, it may very well accelerate the demand for an effective evaluation program. Students are the "consumers" of teaching service. They are in a strategic position to make judgments about the quality of teaching service. At the college level, this pressure is most pronounced, at the present time. It can and may spread to the public school level.

Mr. Tipler raised one additional issue; namely, "what emerging movements

are there which might enhance or defer the widespread program of the Education Association's Professional Rights and Responsibilities Commission?

I don't want to avoid his question, but I'm not sure I have a good answer to this question. Perhaps, it can be discussed in the question and answer period. Thus, may I hold my views on this subject for the time being.

Conclusion: I believe I've taken my allotted time. In conclusion, let me summarize my four-part answer to the question "will teacher militancy make evaluation of teacher performance obsolete"?

1. No, provided we examine and try to ameliorate the basic causes of militancy.

2. No, provided we re-structure our concept of evaluation, moving from inspectional ratings to evaluation of performance in terms of pre-determined goals and objectives.

3. No, if we face realistically the need to differentiate salary on bases other than a traditional application of unilateral rating for merit pay purposes.

4. No, if school systems honestly, deliberately, and rigorously overhaul their evaluation philosophies and processes. To do this they may very well borrow some of the ideas which business and industry have used.